

Aurora Sentinel
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By Rep. Mike Coffman

Less than twenty four hours after Members of Congress cast arguably the most important vote of this year, the Aurora Sentinel indicted Republicans for voting against Nancy Pelosi's bill and for being vocal about our opposition. The editorial asserted that opposing the bill was an endorsement of the status quo and that those who opposed it were fighting against "change" rather than working with Democrats to help shape it.

This is a mischaracterization and a false analogy. The editorial also asserts that Republicans have not in earnest tried to be part of the process. That could not be further from the truth.

My Republican colleagues and I have introduced numerous health care reform proposals. I authored a column on those reforms in the Aurora Sentinel back in September. They are also on my website.

My colleagues and I have begged and pleaded with Democrat leadership in the House to consider our proposals.

The Democrat leadership, controlling Congress, refused to schedule a single hearing on any of the Republican offerings.

They also refused to let a single Republican health care proposal come to the floor for an up or down vote.

The rules of the House of Representatives give power to the majority party and in this case that majority has slammed the door on Republicans, excluding them from the process. It has been the “my-way-or-the-highway” approach to health reform and the American people deserve better.

Opposing the bill that passed Saturday is not an endorsement of the status quo, or a fight against change. It is a rejection of the government takeover of an industry that comprises one-sixth of our nation’s economy and it is the rejection of a bill that will spend a trillion dollars our nation does not have.

The Sentinel editorial also waves a finger at Republicans for looking to tort reform as part of the solution. The Congressional Budget Office, which determines the costs of legislation, estimates that as much as \$54 billion can be saved by the federal government alone. That is \$54 billion dollars which could be used in the operating room instead of the courtroom.

We all agree medical liability reform alone will not solve the current crisis, but the billions of dollars a year spent on defensive medicine and bloated malpractice insurance are unquestionably a key contributor to the skyrocketing costs of care.

Democrats did not have the political will or fortitude to take on the trial lawyers. Don’t take my word for it though.

Listen to former Democratic National Committee Chair and physician, Howard Dean who admitted in a moment of candor at a town hall meeting in August that the only reason tort reform is not in the bill is because Democrats did not want to take on the trial lawyers and that is the plain and simple truth.

The fact is more than 84% of Americans have health insurance, and the vast majority of those are happy with their current coverage. Do we need to work toward insuring the other approximately 16%? Do we need to lower the cost of coverage? Absolutely. Does it take a trillion dollar bill that will fundamentally tear apart the current system, raise premium costs for everyone, force small businesses to make a choice between firing employees and paying crippling new penalties, and force more than 100 million Americans to lose their current coverage to get there? Absolutely not.

Lastly, it should not be overlooked that it wasn't just Republicans who opposed Nancy Pelosi's trillion dollar government takeover of health care. Thirty nine Democrats also voted against the bill, including a member of the Colorado delegation.

Where I stand, opposing the bill was not simply partisan politics. It was a bipartisan stand against a bill that will not improve quality of care, will not improve affordability of coverage, and will not reduce the cost of care.

This is too important to not be shouting from the rooftops, regardless of who doesn't like hearing those shouts.